



## Fact Sheet for Staff

# Bullying

## What is bullying?

Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or a group of persons in the workplace that creates a risk to health and safety.

Within this definition:

- Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect to humiliate, intimidate, undermine or threaten.
- Behaviour includes actions of individuals or a group, and may involve using a system of work as a means of victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening.
- Repeated behaviour means an established pattern of behaviour and not a single incident.
- Risk to health and safety includes risk to the mental or physical health of the person.

### ***This Fact Sheet covers:***

- What is bullying?
- Examples of bullying
- What is not bullying?
- What you can do about bullying

Bullying can be perpetrated by, or occur to, any workplace participant. Bullying may occur between peers or up and down the organisational structure. Managers, supervisors and team leaders must take all reasonable and practical measures to ensure that their staff are not subject to bullying, and do not participate in any form of behaviour which might constitute bullying.

### **Everyone has a right to...**

- work in an environment free from bullying
- be respected and valued at work
- make a complaint if you feel you are being bullied
- not be victimised for making a complaint

### **As a manager or supervisor, you have a responsibility to...**

- be aware of, identify and prevent bullying
- encourage all staff to behave accordingly
- intervene in inappropriate behaviours
- respond to and resolve complaints
- provide a healthy and safe work and study environment

# Examples of bullying

Behaviours that may constitute bullying include:

- Verbal abuse (including shouting or inappropriate tone of voice)
- Exclusion ( this includes not notifying a staff member of meetings, opportunities, results and outcomes directly affecting their employment or ability to do their job effectively, ignoring them at meetings, deliberately omitting or not acknowledging their ideas, contributions and opinions)
- Undermining (decision making or processes)
- Belittling behaviour (including public remarks or emails that may cause humiliation)
- Interfering with a person's workspace, materials and equipment
- Excessive intrusive surveillance or monitoring
- Nit picking and fault finding without justification
- Deliberately withholding information vital for effective work performance
- Constantly and inappropriately changing or setting impossible deadlines, tasks or targets
- Assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job
- Not giving an employee a say in how the job is done, when it is possible and reasonable to do so
- Applying policies unevenly, with the intent to disadvantage someone relative to others

## What is not bullying?

- Workplace counselling, providing constructive criticism, managing performance or any other action in accordance with Deakin University's policies and procedures, does not constitute bullying.
- Differences of opinion, interpersonal conflicts and problems in working relations are part of working life and do not constitute bullying.

## Why does workplace bullying occur?

Workplace bullying can occur for any number of organisational or personal reasons, such as:

- Poor interpersonal skills between staff or poor management skills , including not setting clear expectations
- Poor performance management (rewarding poor performance or not dealing with poor performance effectively)
- Poor workplace communication (for example, poor information flow or staff not being consulted about matters or decisions that directly affect them)
- Poor workplace relationships between management and staff (including informal power relationships)
- Workplace pressures from restructuring, downsizing, poor work practices or excessive workloads
- Personal animosity, prejudices, self interest or dislikes
- Insensitivity to staff members' personal welfare
- Inconsistent application of policy

## Warning Signs that may indicate bullying...

- Negative feedback from staff who leave (exit interviews) indicating dissatisfaction with working relationships
- High levels of absenteeism
- An increase in grievances or complaints about the allocation of work
- High levels of staff turnover
- New staff who resign suddenly, without explanation
- Deterioration of relationships between colleagues, clients or management

## Addressing bullying behaviours

The University has implemented policies and procedures to ensure that it provides a supportive, inclusive, fair and safe working and learning environment for its staff and students. These apply to employees and prospective employees, casual staff, contractors, students, prospective students, clients and visitors.

The [Bullying in the Workplace Operational Policy](#) and procedures can be found on the HRD web pages and the Guide.

### Get advice

Staff members who have concerns about bullying are encouraged to contact their manager or the Manager, Occupational Health & Safety in the Human Resources Services. The Human Resources Division can assist you with any complaints of unfair and unreasonable behaviour, and bullying. The University also has trained Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officers who can provide advice, support and information for people with any inquiries or complaints of unfair and unreasonable behaviour, and bullying.

Deakin University will ensure that all complaints of bullying are treated in a sensitive, fair, and timely manner, that confidentiality of all parties is respected, and that people involved in all aspects of the resolution of complaints are protected from victimisation.

### Consider addressing the issue directly

Telling someone that you find their behaviour inappropriate can be an effective way to resolve some complaints, especially where inappropriate behaviour is caused by ignorance or insensitivity rather than malice.

These strategies can assist you during the conversation:

- stay calm and polite
- focus on the behaviour, not the person
- talk about the effects of the behaviour on you
- make a clear request that the behaviour needs to stop

### Lodge a complaint

If you feel that the matter cannot be resolved informally, complete the [Workplace Bullying Staff Formal Complaint Form](#) if you are a staff member or the [Workplace Bullying Managers' Formal Complaint Form](#) if you are a manager or supervisor. They can be located on the HRD web pages of the Guide.

